

# **Scoping Notice**

## **Paradise 230 kV Project Environmental Assessment**

Rocky Mountain Power/ PacifiCorp, Inc.

### **Introduction**

Rocky Mountain Power has filed joint applications with BLM Pinedale Field Office (PFO) for the construction and operation of new high voltage substation and 230 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission lines in Sublette County, Wyoming, with some infrastructure to be located in northern Sweetwater County in the jurisdiction of the BLM Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO). The proposed new project, called the Paradise 230 kV Project, would add infrastructure to complete a loop of high voltage power between the Jonah Field area, the Paradise Road area near the New Fork River, and connecting to the Big Piney Substation in Big Piney, Wyoming. The purpose of the project would be to serve growing residential, commercial and industrial electrical loads in the region.

### **Project Description**

The proposed Project consists of approximately 690 acres of permanent BLM right of way (ROW) acquisition for electric infrastructure development with an additional 220 acres of private and state ROW grants obtained to complete the project. All construction disturbances would occur within the proposed ROW grant limits.

The first section of line begins just south of the Jonah Gas field development, and crosses a combination of public and private lands. The line crosses the New Fork River to terminate at a new proposed Paradise substation near Paradise Road. Rocky Mountain Power would obtain a new transmission ROW permit, 150 feet wide and approximately 29 miles long, for the construction and operation of a new overhead 230 kV transmission line from the proposed Jonah Field Switching Station, in the jurisdiction of the Rock Springs Field Office, to the proposed Paradise Substation, in the jurisdiction of the Pinedale Field Office. The overhead powerline would consist mostly of H-frame wood pole construction approximately 80 to 100 feet tall spaced approximately every 500 to 1000 feet. In some instances where additional height is needed for clearance of roads or rivers, steel poles may be substituted for wood on the H-frame.

The second section of line begins at the new Paradise substation crossing public and private lands, and crossing the Green River to terminate at the existing Big Piney substation in Big Piney, WY. Rocky Mountain Power will obtain a new transmission ROW permit 150 feet wide and approximately 21 miles long for the construction and operation of a new overhead double circuit 230/69 kV transmission line. The transmission line would be constructed on steel monopoles from the Paradise Substation to a new three-way switch located on Rocky Mountain Power's existing 69 kV transmission line that runs from the Big Piney Substation to their Pinedale Substation. The 3-way switch would be located approximately 6 miles west of the Paradise Substation.

The proposed line would then turn south, paralleling and replacing the existing 69 kV line that occurs on private land within the floodplain of the Green River for approximately 3 miles, crossing the Green River in more than one place. The powerline would then continue to parallel or replace the existing 69 kV line as it is routed on a terrace along the eastern edge of the floodplain for approximately 9 miles. The spacing of the new 230/69 kV double circuit line would be approximately 300 to 700 feet with above ground heights ranging from approximately 80 to 100 feet tall. From a point south of the southern-most crossing of the Green River, the 230 kV line would be single circuit on wood pole H-frame structures, running parallel to an existing 25 kV line west into the Big Piney substation. The wood H-Frame structures would be spaced approximately 500 to 1000 feet apart with above ground heights ranging from approximately 80 to 100 feet.

Rocky Mountain Power would construct and operate the new Jonah Field 230 kV switching station on a 10-acre parcel near the Jonah Gas Gathering primary delivery point, to be leased from Rock Springs Field Office. The switch station is proposed to be located in T28N R108W NW1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 9.

The new proposed Paradise Substation, would be constructed north of the New Fork River and approximately 5 miles west of Boulder, Wyoming, in the jurisdiction of the BLM Pinedale Field Office. This substation would be located in T31N R109W SE1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 9 on 15 acres. The substation would step down voltage from 230 kV to 69 kV and 25 kV to be distributed to reach local industrial, commercial, and residential users in the area.

### **Transmission Line Design**

The design, construction, operation and maintenance of the 230 kV new transmission lines would meet or exceed the requirements of the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC), U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Standards and Rocky Mountain Power's requirements for safety and protection of landowners and their property. Height above ground would be based on NESC and Rocky Mountain Power's standards. Conductors would be non-reflective.

### **Insulators and Associated Hardware**

The tangent structures of the 230 kV line would have polymer suspension insulators 80 to 86 inches long. The angle and dead end structures would have polymer insulators 92 to 99 inches long. One polymer insulator per phase would be used on all of the tangent structures and up to three insulators per phase on the dead end and angle structures would be used. All angle and dead end structures would have associated down guying, except where steel poles with foundations are used.

### **Construction**

Construction would commence once the BLM ROW grant and notice to proceed are obtained and all seasonal stipulations or conditions are removed. Construction is expected to take approximately 30-weeks to complete and would involve approximately 35 construction personnel in the project area at any time.

The construction of the substation and switching station would begin with excavation of the site surface to remove the top soil layer and unwanted contours. The sites would be graded for the appropriate contours and civil work would take place in the auguring of holes for drilled cement piers and further excavation for other foundation work. The graded site would be covered with

rock/gravel to attain the desired final grade. Steel structural support would be installed followed by the installation of the electrical equipment such as breakers, transformers, control houses, etc. An eight foot fence with gating would surround the substation when completed. The substation would be constructed so that moisture that would fall would not pool but would be directed away from the substation site. Best management practices (BMPs) would be utilized to minimize soil erosion.

Construction of the transmission line would follow a general sequence beginning with the identification of access roads and staging areas within the ROW grant, and if necessary, upgrading areas for the transportation of materials, personnel and equipment prior to beginning construction. Each structure location would be prepared for equipment pad setup such as an auger, bucket truck, and crane. Typically a number of steps take place at the same time on different sections of the line on a transmission project of this magnitude. The first would be the auguring of the holes for the structures, the second step in the sequence would be the framing of the structure on the ground, then the erection of the structure in the air, and finally the installation of the conductor and shield/communication wire. The disturbed site would be reclaimed for the majority of any soil disturbance at the time the framing and conductor installation is completed. Once the full transmission line is in place, final recontouring and reseeding would be completed.

### **Structure Sites Clearing**

At each structure site, leveled areas, called pads, are needed to facilitate the safe operation of equipment such as construction cranes. The leveled areas required for the location and safe operation of large cranes would be approximately 50 feet by 50 feet. The work areas would be cleared of vegetation only to the extent necessary. After line construction, all pads would be graded to blend as near as possible with the natural contours and disturbed area reseeded where required keeping in mind these leveled areas would need to remain as much as possible for future maintenance when needed.

Conductor pulling sites would be located at approximately 2-mile increments along the assumed centerline of the project. The leveled areas required for the location and safe operation of stringing and tensioning equipment would be approximately 100 feet wide by 200 feet long. The areas needed for the pulling sites would be approximately 150 feet wide by 400 feet long. As with structure sites, the work areas would be cleared of vegetation only to the extent necessary. After line construction, areas would be graded to blend as near as possible with the natural contours and revegetated where required.

### **Construction Yards**

The substation construction sites would serve as field offices; reporting locations for workers; parking space for vehicles and equipment; sites for material storage; and stations for equipment maintenance. Yard sites other than substation sites on BLM property would be the responsibility of the contractor to coordinate the construction and approval of the yards when needed.

Rocky Mountain Power would utilize, to a practicable extent, existing disturbed areas for construction staging areas. Other staging areas on private lands may be required, and would be coordinated by the contractor with the landowner in advance of construction.

### **Relationship to Existing Plans and Documents**

The document that directs management on federal lands within the PFO is the 1988 approved Record of Decision (ROD) for the Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP), as amended. The document that directs management decisions of the RSFO is the Green River Resource Management Plan (BLM 1997). The Project will comply with all applicable Best Management Practices and guidelines for surface disturbing activities.

The Pinedale RMP is currently under revision with a ROD expected during review period of this EA or very shortly thereafter. Therefore, the environmental analysis for the Paradise 230 kV Project would also consider and incorporate any relevant decisions, terms, and conditions of use as described in the revised Pinedale RMP and Record of Decision, when it is made available.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

The proposed project would be analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To comply with NEPA and applicable Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that implement NEPA, the BLM is required to prepare an environmental analysis. The environmental document, which is an EA for this project, would serve the following purposes:

- to provide the public and governmental agencies with information about the potential environmental consequences of the project and alternatives;
- to identify all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the project and alternatives; and
- to provide the responsible official with information upon which to make an informed decision regarding the project.

One element of the NEPA process is “scoping.” Scoping activities are initiated early in the process to:

- identify reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental analysis;
- identify issues of environmental concern related to the proposed project; and
- determine the depth of analysis for issues addressed in the EA.

This Scoping Statement has been prepared to enable governmental agencies, the general public, and other interested parties to participate in and contribute to the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

### **Preliminary Resource Management Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities**

The following issues and concerns have been identified by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. The issues identified below are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a starting point for public input.

- Potential effects to visual resources in the Project Area.

- Potential effects to surface water and groundwater resources, including floodplains.
- Potential effects related to reclamation of disturbed areas and control of invasive plants.
- Potential effects to cultural, historical, and paleontological resources within the Project Area.
- Potential effects to wildlife habitats and populations within the Project Area, including big game, raptors, and sage-grouse.
- Potential effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate plant and animal species.
- Potential cumulative effects of development activities when combined with other ongoing and proposed developments.
- Potential conflicts between industrial development activities and recreational opportunities.

### **Interdisciplinary Team**

Based upon current understanding of issues, concerns, and opportunities, an interdisciplinary team (IDT) comprised of the following resource specialists has been identified:

- IDT Leader
- Rangeland Management Specialist
- Archaeologist
- Historic Trails Specialist
- Realty Specialist
- Visual Resources and Outdoor Recreation Planner
- Hydrologist
- Wildlife Biologist
- Fisheries Biologist
- Botanist
- Socioeconomic Specialist
- Planning and Environmental Coordinator

### **Public Involvement**

Public input is important in establishing the level and scope of the analysis necessary. The public is encouraged to participate in the environmental analysis process to help identify the level of analysis needed, alternatives to the proposed action, other issues or concerns that should be analyzed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure the completeness of the analysis process. It would best serve the needs of the BLM for a concentrated analysis if you would submit all scoping comments by June 13, 2008, which allows a 30-day comment period.

Please submit your comments to:

Jen Klinesmith, Project Lead

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**Initial Mailing List**

The initial mailing distribution for this Scoping Notice includes the following agencies. Additional organizations, media, leaseholders, and individuals may also be placed on the distribution list.

Sweetwater County

Sweetwater Conservation District

Sweetwater County Weed and Pest

Sublette County

Sublette County Conservation District

Sublette County Extension

Sublette County Weed and Pest

City of Rock Springs

Town of Big Piney

Town of Marbleton

Town of Pinedale

Wyoming Business Council